

VZCZCXRO2244  
PP RUEHDBU RUEHFL RUEHKW RUEHLA RUEHNP RUEHROV RUEHSL RUEHSR  
DE RUEHAK #1659 3230617  
ZNY CCCCC ZZH  
P 190617Z NOV 09  
FM AMEMBASSY ANKARA  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 1264  
INFO RUEHZL/EUROPEAN POLITICAL COLLECTIVE PRIORITY  
RUEHGB/AMEMBASSY BAGHDAD PRIORITY 1515  
RUEHIT/AMCONSUL ISTANBUL PRIORITY 6543  
RUEUITH/AFOSI 52 FIS ANKARA TU PRIORITY  
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC PRIORITY  
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHDC PRIORITY  
RHMFISS/EUCOM POLAD VAIHINGEN GE PRIORITY  
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC//J-3/J-5// PRIORITY  
RHEHAAA/NSC WASHDC PRIORITY  
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L ANKARA 001659

SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT ALSO FOR EUR/SE  
BAGHDAD PLEASE PASS TO RRT ERBIL

E.O. 12958: DECL: 11/17/2019  
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PTER](#) [PHUM](#) [TU](#)  
SUBJECT: TURKEY: OCALAN GETS SOME COMPANY

REF: A. ANKARA 1653  
[1](#)B. ANKARA 1604

Classified By: POL Counselor Daniel O'Grady, reasons 1.4 (b,d)

[1](#)1. (C) SUMMARY: On November 17 the GOT transferred five inmates to the island prison of Imrali, where jailed Kurdistan Worker's Party (PKK) leader Abdullah Ocalan has been the sole prisoner in solitary confinement since 1999. Three additional prisoners are expected to be transferred there soon. Reactions to the transfers were predictable, with nationalist parties condemning the move and the Kurdish-based Democratic Society Party (DTP) praising it. Ocalan's attorney complained that the transfers did not go far enough. Although the plan had been in the works for some time, the move conveniently coincides with the Justice and Development Party (AKP) Government's attempts to promote its Democratic Opening initiative across the country. END SUMMARY

[1](#)2. (SBU) On November 17 the Turkish Ministry of Justice transferred five inmates from other prisons in the country to the island prison of Imrali, where jailed Kurdistan Worker's Party (PKK) leader Abdullah Ocalan has been the sole prisoner in solitary confinement for the past eleven years. All five of the new inmates are serving life terms for terrorism-related offenses. Four are PKK members and one was a member of the Revolutionary People's Liberation Party-Front (DHPK-C). According to the Ministry of Justice, three other prisoners will be transferred to the prison soon. The plan to transfer the inmates had been in the works for some time in order to comply with recommendations from the Council of Europe's Committee for the Prevention of Torture (CPT). All the inmates in the prison, including Ocalan, will be allowed to spend one hour per day together in a common area of the prison.

[1](#)3. (SBU) Reactions to the transfers were predictable. The Nationalist People's Party (MHP) was upset at the transfers and viewed them as accommodating Ocalan and rewarding the terrorist organization. The Kurdish Democratic Society Party (DTP) was pleased with the transfers; but co-chairman Ahmet Turk said that Ocalan should have never been placed in solitary confinement in the first place. Ibrahim Bilmez, one of Ocalan's attorneys, said that the transfers were not enough because they alone do not meet the other recommendations of the CPT, such as: the right to use the phone, the right to receive other visitors besides his family and lawyers, and the right to use a small store/canteen at the prison. Bilmez also stated that two months before he had

requested that prison officials allow Ocalan to watch television and read news publications, but that the request had been denied.

14. (C) COMMENT: Turkey's advocates in Europe should welcome Turkey complying with the recommendations of the CPT. While the plan to transfer inmates to Imrali had been in the works for some time, the timing of the move conveniently coincides with the Justice and Development Party (AKP) government's attempts to promote its Democratic Opening initiative across the country. While this could help the AKP win support from Kurds in the southeast who are sympathetic to Ocalan and the PKK, they will also probably lose support from those who see Ocalan as a threat to the Turkish State.

JEFFREY

"Visit Ankara's Classified Web Site at <http://www.intelink.sgov.gov/wiki/Portal:Turkey>"